U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
U.S. Mission to Afghanistan (Doha)
Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)

Funding Opportunity Title: Supporting Access to Higher Education for Afghans
Funding Opportunity Number: SCAKAB-23-CA-008-SCA-06012023
Deadline for Applications: July 10, 2023 [11:59p.m., U.S. Eastern time]
Deadline for Questions: June 16, 2023 (11:59p.m., U.S. Eastern time)
Assistance Listing Number: 19.501 Public Diplomacy Programs for Afghanistan and Pakistan
Total Amount Available: $1,500,000.00
Program Office: Public Diplomacy Section, U.S. Mission to Afghanistan (Doha)

CONTACT INFORMATION

- For questions relating to Grants.gov, please call the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726.
- To inquire about the process for obtaining a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) contact Donald Hunter at HunterDS@state.gov.
- For assistance with the requirements of this solicitation, contact KabulPDSProposals@state.gov.

In order to be eligible to receive an award under this NOFO, organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. **Please begin the registration processes immediately to ensure the registrations are completed well in advance of the submission deadline**. The process can require several **weeks** for the registrations to be validated and confirmed. See *Section D: Submission Requirements* for further details.

Due to the volume of applicants and inquiries, the Public Diplomacy Section (PDS) **does not** accept letters of intent, concept papers, or requests for meetings or phone calls prior to application.

All application materials must be submitted electronically through Grants.gov. Application materials submitted via other means such as email will **not** be accepted.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the application package is received in its entirety. Incomplete applications will be considered ineligible. Applicants are urged to begin the application process well before the submission deadline. No exceptions will be made for organizations that have not completed the necessary steps.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Public Diplomacy Section (PDS) of the U.S. Mission to Afghanistan is pleased to announce an open competition for eligible organizations to submit applications to carry out a program aimed at supporting higher education opportunities for Afghans, in particular women and girls.

Successful proposals will focus on at least one of three areas of support for higher education:

1) Individual and/or series of short online courses (at least three weeks and up to six months in duration) to assist educated young professional Afghans in maintaining or developing professional skills in target fields;
2) Mentorship, coaching, and/or networking support for young professionals to further develop their skills through relationships with other Afghans in their field and/or;
3) Post-secondary “bridge” programs that prepare students who have already studied at the secondary level but may lack an internationally recognized diploma or qualification for university admissions, or to otherwise prepare them for university studies.

PDS intends to issue awards for a period of performance between 24 to 36 months. Options years may be considered depending on funding availability.

Background

More than 50% of Afghans are under the age of 35 and this young population is particularly vulnerable in the current environment in Afghanistan. Taliban edicts threaten women and girls’ access to secondary schools and higher education. Within a generation, this will result in declining levels of achievement for women, and complete marginalization of women from the workforce. Young men are also reportedly forced to curtail their education to help support their families, and professionals (both male and female) are struggling to keep their skills up to date in today’s rapidly evolving professional environment. Following the Taliban takeover in August 2021, many Afghan professionals and scholars left Afghanistan resulting in a significant loss of human capital in Afghanistan’s workforce.

Within a generation, this could result in declining levels of achievement for women, and complete marginalization of women from the workforce. It is of critical importance to U.S. policy that educated women in Afghanistan have opportunities to maintain their knowledge and skills, and that the next generation of women retain access to higher education. Together with men, the women who are educated through our programs will be the future partners of the United States in Afghanistan, ready to rejoin the workforce, to advocate for the needs of women and families, and to support political and economic stabilization. This work will require a repositioning of new resources toward short-term virtual courses of study designed and delivered by U.S. universities—in fields such as business, information technology, law, allied health sciences, education, and other fields. Maintaining an educated workforce in these fields will be the basis for political and economic stabilization in future years.

Program Goal:

To support higher education opportunities for Afghan students and young professionals, particularly women and girls, inside Afghanistan, and to maintain an educated workforce in which will be the basis for political and economic stabilization in Afghanistan.

Project Objectives:

Objective 1: Equip Afghan professionals, primarily women, across various fields inside Afghanistan with additional skills needed in their career fields and support them to maintain and extend existing skills in an environment in which opportunities to use them professionally is limited.

Objective 3: Increase connections between Afghan professionals inside Afghanistan and others in their field, both inside Afghanistan and in outside of Afghanistan, to share knowledge and opportunities.

Objective 2: Increase the ability of young Afghans in Afghanistan to access to higher education opportunities, in particular women and girls and those from marginalized and lower-income communities.

Target Audiences:

The primary audience for this project is Afghans ages 18 - 35 inside Afghanistan, particularly women and girls who, are able to benefit from higher education opportunities. The program should focus on supporting study and training in fields such as business/entrepreneurship, information technology, education, law, and allied health sciences and should support those who are interested in taking an active part in contributing to the social and economic future of Afghanistan. The participants should reflect the diversity of Afghanistan and include women and men, Afghans from urban and rural areas, as well as a mix of ethnic groups.

The target audience for Objective 1 and 2 is professional Afghans (at least 80% women), ages 18-35, who have attended university, or have at least three years of work experience in their field or participated in donor-funded education programs. The program should target professionals in Afghanistan in at least three different fields (for example: Business/Entrepreneurship, Information Technology, Education, Law, and Allied Health Sciences) who are interested in taking an active part in contributing to the social and economic future of Afghanistan. Afghans in diaspora communities outside of Afghanistan may be included in this element of the program in limited numbers for the purpose of establishing or maintaining networks and relationships for Afghans inside Afghanistan with their counterparts outside the country.

The target audience for Objective 3 is Afghans inside of Afghanistan (at least 80% women) who have studied at the secondary level and who seek to continue with university and/or post-secondary education but need additional support to qualify for admission to university.

Project Details

The proposals should include the following:

- **Clear Objectives:** The proposal should clearly outline the project's objectives and how they will be achieved.
- **Target Audience and Beneficiaries:** The proposal should identify the primary audience and beneficiaries of the project, as described above. This should include a plan for how participants will be recruited, ensuring that the project includes a diverse group of beneficiaries from both rural and urban areas.
- **Strategies and Activities:** The proposal should describe the strategies and activities that will be implemented to achieve the project's objectives, including, but not limited to, virtual or in-person capacity building, mentorship and networking, and short-term certification programs. These plans should include:
    - Details on the type and number of activities that will be available to the group participants.
    - Key personnel or partner organizations – along with their requisite experience – who will help develop the program schedule and conduct trainings.
    - For programs targeting Afghan professionals (objectives 1 and 2), activities could include short-term (at least three weeks and up to six months in duration) standalone courses or series of courses leading to undergraduate and/or graduate certificates or other professional training courses.
    - For programs focused on connecting Afghan professionals (objective 2), proposals should include a plan for how to connect the Afghan professionals in specific fields; a plan for managing and encouraging connectivity via social media or other virtual platforms, in-person (when possible), or in a hybrid setting, and/or a plan for providing interactive opportunities to practice skills.
    - For programs targeting secondary students (objective 3), activities could include certification and diploma programs, English-language training, preparation for academic exams leading to a high school certificate, pre-academic training, educational advising, and career readiness training.

- **Media and Public Outreach:** All proposals should include a plan to develop content—including text and multimedia content—that is both (1) suitable for public release in order to create awareness about U.S. government efforts to promote higher education for Afghans in Afghanistan, and (2) sensitive to the security concerns of individual participants. Content may take the form of results reports and vignettes, audio/video from online sessions and graduation ceremonies, draft social media posts, and briefings for U.S. and international journalists on the program and its outcomes.

- **Participant Recruitment:** All proposals should include a plan for recruiting a diverse set of participants who are likely to complete the program successfully and intend to use their knowledge in the workforce, conditions permitting. If potential awardees plan to partner with organizations inside or outside of Afghanistan, their proposals should detail which organizations they will work with and what capabilities they have in participant recruitment.
- **Resource Allocation:** The proposal should outline the resources needed to implement the project, including personnel, and equipment. It should also specify how these resources will be allocated to ensure that the project is efficient and effective.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** The proposal should include a plan for monitoring and evaluating the project's progress and impact. This should involve regular reporting on key performance indicators, as well as feedback from beneficiaries and other stakeholders.
- **Long-term sustainability plan:** The proposal should outline a sustainability plan to ensure that the project's impact is long-lasting.

Proposal narratives should include a brief commitment to implement the program for the base period of at least 24 to 36 months, plus one additional option period. The narrative should focus on details specific to the implementation of the base period program, with the understanding that the program design, duration, and number of beneficiaries would be similar when/if the subsequent one option period is exercised. PDS will conduct a performance evaluation/review to determine if an option period will be exercised. Satisfactory performance and the availability of funds is a condition of continued administration of the program and execution of all option periods.

The safety and security of all participants and activities under this project are the sole responsibility of the award recipient. Due to the changing nature of security in Afghanistan, PDS requires all applicants to include in their proposal a security plan to accompany appropriate programmatic elements within their proposal. Security packages may include, but are not limited to, secure transportation, lodging, and emergency evacuation for personnel living or working in Afghanistan. Reasonable costs for necessary security are allowable expenses and may be included in the proposed budget. Additionally, applicants should submit their organizational policy for working within high-risk environments, which should include security operational procedures.

The U.S. Mission to Afghanistan cannot stress enough that the security and safety of implementing partners and program participants is paramount. All program proposals must describe any safety precautions and measures that will be undertaken to minimize risks to implementors as well as participants. The U.S. Mission to Afghanistan also reserves the right to suspend or adjust program elements as necessary to ensure the protection of implementing partners and participants.

This project will be funded by Economic Support Funds, authorized by the Foreign Assistance Act, and is subject to the statutory limitations of such funding.

B. FEDERAL AWARD INFORMATION

Length of performance period: 24 to 36 months
Number of awards anticipated: multiple awards (dependent on amounts)
Award amounts: awards may range from a minimum of $500,000.00 to a maximum of $1,000,000.00.
Total available funding: $1,500,000.00
Type of Funding: FY23 Economic Support Funds
Anticipated programs start date: September 2023

This notice is subject to availability of funding.

Funding Instrument Type: Grant

Program Performance Period: Proposed programs should be completed between 24 to 36 months.

The Department of State will entertain applications for continuation grants funded under these awards beyond the initial budget period on a non-competitive basis subject to availability of funds, satisfactory progress of the program, and a determination that continued funding would be in the best interest of the U.S. Department of State.

Support for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA): All programs should consider strategies for expanding the pool of individuals/organizations/beneficiaries to afford opportunities for as diverse and inclusive population as is feasible to bring diverse perspectives based on religion, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, national origin, and age to implementation of the program.

C. ELIGILIBITY INFORMATION

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligibility is open to all types of applicants except for individuals. Please refer to Section D for funding restrictions. Organizations may sub-award/contract with other entities, but only one entity may be the prime recipient of the award. When sub-awarding/contracting with other entities, the responsibilities of each entity must be clearly defined in the proposal.

2. Cost Sharing or Matching

Cost sharing or matching is not required for this funding opportunity.

3. Other Eligibility Requirements

- In order to be eligible to receive an award, all organizations must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number issued via www.SAM.gov as well as a valid registration on www.SAM.gov. Please see Section D.3 for more information. Individuals are not required to have a UEI or be registered in SAM.gov.
- Applications that fail to furnish all documents and information outlined in Section D of this notice or comply with the stated requirements will not be considered for an award.
- Any applicant listed on the Excluded Parties List System (EPLS) in SAM is not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR, 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR, 1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension." Additionally, no entity listed on the EPLS can participate in any activities under an award. All applicants are strongly encouraged to review the EPLS in SAM to ensure that no ineligible entity is included.
- There is no limit on the number of applications an entity may submit for this NOFO.
- Previous federal award recipients that are not/were not in compliance with the terms of the award, including the financial and program reporting requirements, are not eligible for an award under this NOFO. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure it is in compliance with all applicable terms, conditions, and Office of Management and Budget guidance and requirements.
- Applicants may be asked to submit information required by DS Form 4184 Risk Analysis Information about their organization and its principal personnel. Vetting information is also required for all sub-award and contractor performance on assistance awards identified by the Department as presenting a risk of terrorist financing. If an application is selected to move forward in the review process and when vetting information is requested by the Grants Officer, information may be submitted on the secure web portal at https://ramportal.state.gov or via email to RAM@state.gov . Questions about the form may be emailed to RAM@state.gov . Failure to submit information when requested or failure to pass Dept of State vetting may be grounds for rejecting your proposal.
- Applicants are advised that individuals proposed to participate in an award resulting from this NOFO (recipient employees, contractors, beneficiaries, etc.) are subject to vetting for involvement in corrupt practices, illicit narcotics production or trafficking,

and violation of human rights. Successful vetting is a precondition to any award under this NOFO.

4. This opportunity will not support:
- Projects relating to partisan political activity;
- Charitable or development activities;
- Construction projects;
- Projects that support specific religious activities;
- Fund-raising campaigns;
- Lobbying for specific legislation or programs;
- Scientific research or surveys;
- Commercial projects;
- Projects intended primarily for the growth or institutional development of the organization;
- Projects that duplicate existing projects; or
- Illegal activities.

D. APPLICATION AND SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Address to Request Application Package

This NOFO document and any amendments can be found at www.grants.gov and Grant Opportunities - U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan (usembassy.gov). If you require special accommodation to access any information contained in this announcement, please contact KabulPDSProposals@state.gov (preferred method of communication)

Content and Form of Application Submission

Please follow all instructions below carefully. Proposals that do not meet the requirements of this announcement or fail to comply with the stated requirements will be ineligible.

Content of Application

Please ensure:
- The proposal clearly addresses the goals and objectives of this funding opportunity
- All documents are in English
- All budgets are in U.S. dollars
- All pages are numbered
- All documents are formatted to 8 ½ x 11 paper, and
- All Microsoft Word documents are single-spaced, 12 point Calibri font, with a minimum of 1-inch margins.
- All materials are submitted in one of the following formats: .xls, .xlsx. .doc, .docx, .pdf, or.jpeg. Other file types will likely not be reviewed.
- Grants.gov does not accept all UTF-8 special characters in file attachment names. Applicants are able to enter all special characters from the UTF-8 character set when

submitting applications and information to Grants.gov. However, if the grantor's system is not yet compatible with these special characters, the grantor system may produce garbled or missing text in the application. As a result, the application may be rejected.

The following documents are **required**:

1. Mandatory application forms

- **SF-424** ***(Application for Federal Assistance – organizations)***
- **SF-424A** ***(Budget Information for Non-Construction programs)***
- **SF-424B** ***(Assurances for Non-Construction programs) (note: the SF-424B is only required for individuals and for organizations not registered in SAM.gov)***

All submissions must include the SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance and the SF-424A Budget Information—Non-Construction. These forms and the instructions for completing them are available at http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/forms.html under the heading "SF-424 Family."

2. Summary Page: Cover sheet stating the applicant's name and organization, proposal date, program title, program period proposed start and end date, and brief purpose of the program.

3. Proposal (20 pages maximum): The proposal should contain sufficient information that anyone not familiar with it would understand exactly what the applicant wants to do. You may use your own proposal format, but it must include all the items below.

- **Proposal Summary:** Short narrative that outlines the proposed program, including program objectives and anticipated impact.
- **Introduction to the Organization or Individual applying**: A description of past and present operations, showing ability to carry out the program, including information on all previous grants from the U.S. Embassy and/or U.S. government agencies.
- **Problem Statement:** Clear, concise and well-supported statement of the problem to be addressed and why the proposed program is needed
- **Program Goals and Objectives:** The "goals" describe what the program is intended to achieve. The "objectives" refer to the intermediate accomplishments on the way to the goals. These should be achievable and measurable.
- **Program Activities**: Describe the program activities and how they will help achieve the objectives.
- **Program Methods and Design**: A description of how the program is expected to work to solve the stated problem and achieve the goal. Include a logic model as appropriate.
- **Proposed Program Schedule and Timeline:** The proposed timeline for the program activities. Include the dates, times, and locations of planned activities and events.
- **Key Personnel:** At a minimum the Program Manager and the Finance Officer position will be designated key personnel for this project. The proposal narrative should include names, titles, roles, and experience/qualifications of key personnel involved in the program and communicate what proportion of their time will be devoted to this program. As a required attachment, applicants must include a 1-page CV or resume for

each key personnel proposed for the program. If an individual for these positions have not been identified, the applicant may submit a 1-page position description identifying the qualifications and skills required for the position in lieu of a resume.

- **Program Partners:** List the names and type of involvement of key partner organizations and sub-awardees.
- **Future Funding or Sustainability** Applicant's plan for continuing the program beyond the grant period, or the availability of other resources, if applicable.
- **Support of Equity and Underserved Communities:** A description of how the applicant plans on incorporating principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) and engaging underserved communities in their program's administration, design, and implementation. For more information, please reference Section F. Federal Award Administration Information.
- **Program Monitoring & Evaluation Plan:** This is an important part of successful grants. Throughout the time-frame of the grant, how will the activities be monitored to ensure they are happening in a timely manner, and how will the program be evaluated to make sure it is meeting the goals of the grant? Proposals must include a draft Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP). The M&E PMP should show how applicants intend to measure and demonstrate progress towards the project's objectives and goals. Annex 2 of this funding opportunity contains a template that may be used to fulfill this requirement. While the applicant is free to create their own template, completing Annex 2 will ensure a thorough PMP.

The required components to the PMP are as follows:

a. **Monitoring and Evaluation Narrative:** In narrative form, applicants should describe how they intend to monitor and evaluate the activities of their award and collect data that tracks award performance. In addition, the applicant should describe any M&E processes, including key personnel, management structure (where M&E fits into the overall program's staff structure), technology, and as well provide a brief budget narrative explaining any line-item expenditures for M&E listed in the program's budget. Submission should demonstrate an ability to adjust project activities based on new information. If the proposal is from a prior grantee, the proposal discusses how the grantee has adapted, improved or otherwise modified their approach based on learning from previous experience. This narrative is limited to two pages.

b. **Theory of Change Diagram:** Applicants will be expected to submit either a Theory of Change diagram or an If-Then Statement that illustrates how project activities will lead to intended outcomes. Annex 2 includes a suggested format for these requirements.

c. **Monitoring and Evaluation Datasheet:** The applicant must include their proposed activities and their expected outputs and outcomes as well as the goals and objectives as written in the NOFO. The datasheet's purpose is to explicitly illustrate how a project's activities lead to tangible results (such as increased beneficiary skills, knowledge, or attitudes) that ultimately address a PDS objective. For more information, please see Annex 2.1: Instructions.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Datasheet must include the following components (depending on the proposal's focus), which demonstrate progress toward the program objectives set out in the NOFO:

- A comparative qualitative analysis of individual participants' entrance and exit interviews that allow demonstration and measurement of baseline and skill level progress in professional development.
- Participants surveys conducted at the start of the program and at the conclusion of each program end to track participants progress on key attitudes and skills and to measure overall satisfaction with the program, including constructive feedback on staff members supporting the Afghan participants.
- Regular reports on program/training progress throughout the program, including required narrative and financial reports that raise issues of concern as they arise and identify possible solutions.
- Evidence in routine reports documenting professional placement and academic and community achievement during the program and after graduating from the program.
- A before and after survey of participants in any capacity building/training.

The selected applicant's M&E PMP is subject to review and approval before any award will be issued under this NOFO. The selected applicant will be required to work with PDS Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist to ensure the applicant's M&E PMP achieves an expected level of expertise and meets PDS objectives. The potential grantee will also be required Department-mandated performance indicators, per funding regulations.

Expenses directly associated with monitoring and evaluation are considered allowable. The suggested template includes a space to list the portion of the total budget amount directly associated with monitoring and evaluation activities.

4. **Detailed Line-Item Budget:** Applications will not be considered complete and eligible for consideration unless they include budgets that respond to the NOFO guidelines. Complete budgets must include detailed line items outlining specific cost requirements for proposed activities. Applicants must adhere to the regulations found in 2 CFR 200 Uniform Administrative Requirements, Costs Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards. The allowability of costs incurred by commercial organizations is determined in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) at 48 CFR Part 30 and Part 31.

Applicants must include in their submission a detailed line-item budget for the base period and a budget category summary budget for each option period. Upon request, the recipient will be expected to present a detailed line-item budget for the option period(s).

Applications must include a detailed line-item budget (in Microsoft Excel or similar spreadsheet format) that delineates funds requested from the Embassy and cost-share (see below for more information on budget format). Costs must be in U.S. dollars. The budget must identify the total amount of funding requested, with a breakdown of amounts to be spent in the following budget categories: personnel; fringe benefits; travel; equipment; supplies; consultants/contracts; other direct costs; and indirect costs. See Annex 1 for a description of the types of costs that should be included in each category.

Additional Budget Considerations

- Please note the audit requirements for Department of State awards in the Standard Terms and Conditions https://www.state.gov/m/a/ope/index.htm and 2 CFR 200, Subpart F – Audit Requirements. The cost of the required audits may be charged either as an allowable direct cost to the award OR included in the organization's established indirect costs in the award's detailed budget.

- Organizations claiming indirect costs should have an established Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). A copy of the NICRA should be provided with the proposal package. If sub-grantees are claiming indirect costs, they should have an established NICRA, and it should also be submitted with the proposal package. Information on how to obtain a NICRA rate is listed in Section G. **If a non-profit organization does not have a NICRA and the proposal budget has a line item for indirect cost charges, those indirect charges may not exceed 10% of Modified Total Direct Costs.** The 10% maximum does not apply to for-profit entities. For-profit entities that do not have a NICRA but do have a formally established General and Administrative (G&A) rate may apply the G&A rate. For-profit entities that do not have a formally established G&A rate should allocate indirect costs to the appropriate direct cost category.

- Grant funds cannot be used for alcoholic beverages.

5. **Budget Justification Narrative**: The purpose of the budget justification narrative is to supplement the information provided in the budget spreadsheet by justifying how the budget cost elements are necessary to implement project objectives and accomplish the project goals. The budget justification narrative is a tool to help PDS staff fully understand the budgetary needs of the applicant and is an opportunity to provide descriptive information about the requested costs beyond the constraints of the budget template. Together, the detailed budget spreadsheet, the budget justification narrative, and the SF-424A should provide a complete financial and qualitative description that supports the proposed project plan and should be directly relatable to the specific project components described in the applicant's proposal.

6. **Required Attachments:**

a. **Key Personnel Resumes**: A résumé, not to exceed one page in length, must be included for the proposed key staff persons, such as the Project Manager and Finance Officer, as well as any speakers or trainers (if applicable). If an individual for this type of position has not been identified, the applicant may submit a 1-page position description, identifying the qualifications and skills required for that position, in lieu of a résumé.

b. **Letters of support from program partners:** Letters of support should be included for sub-recipients or other partners. The letters must identify the type of relationship to be entered into (formal or informal), the roles and responsibilities of each partner in relation to the proposed project activities, and the expected result of the partnership. The individual letters cannot exceed 1 page in length.

c. If your organization has a Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) and includes NICRA charges in the budget, your latest NICRA should be included in the application submission.

d. Proof of Non-profit Status –Documentation to demonstrate the applicant's non-profit status (e.g., U.S.-based organizations should submit a copy of their 501(c)(3) Internal Revenue Service determination letter, and non-U.S. organizations should provide evidence of non-profit status issued by a government entity).

e. **Proof of Registration:** A copy of the organization's registration should be provided with the proposal application. U.S.-based organizations should submit a copy of their IRS determination letter. Afghanistan-based organizations should submit a copy of their certificate of registration from the appropriate government organization.

f. **Security plan:** All proposals must include a security plan. We require award recipients to notify the Public Diplomacy Section in advance of any travel by staff, program participants, or other individuals to Afghanistan in connection with the program.

g. Organizational policy for working in high-risk environments.

Other items <u>NOT</u> required/requested with the application submission, but which *may* be requested if your application is approved to move forward in the review process include:

a) Copies of an organization or program audit within the last two (2) years
b) Copies of relevant human resources, financial, or procurement policies
c) Copies of other relevant organizational policies or documentation that would help the Department determine your organization's capacity to manage a federal grant award overseas.

d) Information to determine what financial controls and standard operating procedures an organization uses to procure goods and services, hire staff and track time and attendance, pay for grant-related travel, and identify other financial transactions that may be necessary to undertake the project activities
e) The Embassy reserves the right to request any additional programmatic and/or financial information regarding the proposal.

Applications are accepted in English only, and final grant agreements will be concluded in English. Budgets should be submitted in U.S. dollars, and final grant agreements will be conducted in U.S. dollars.

Required Registrations:

Unique Entity Identifier and registration in the System for Award Management (SAM.gov) *(NOTE: This section is required, with no exceptions.)*

All organizations, whether based in the United States or in another country, must have a Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) and an active registration with the www.SAM.gov . A UEI is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards.

Any applicant with an exclusion in the System for Award Management (SAM) is not eligible to apply for an assistance award in accordance with the OMB guidelines at 2 CFR 180 that implement Executive Orders 12549 (3 CFR, 1986 Comp., p. 189) and 12689 (3 CFR, 1989 Comp., p. 235), "Debarment and Suspension."

The Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) is one of the data elements mandated by Public Law 109-282, the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act (FFATA), for all Federal awards. SAM.gov is the Federal government's primary database for complying with FFATA reporting requirements. OMB designated SAM.gov as the central repository to facilitate applicant and recipient use of a single public website that consolidates data on all federal financial assistance. Under the law, it is mandatory to register in SAM.gov.

Starting April 2022, the UEI will be assigned when an organization registers or renews it's registration in SAM.gov at www.SAM.gov. To access SAM.gov an organization is required to have a Login.gov account. Organization can create an account at https://login.gov/. As a reminder, organizations need to renew its sam.gov registration annually.

www.sam.gov requires all entities to renew their registration once a year in order to maintain an active registration status in SAM.gov. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure it has an active registration in SAM.gov.

If an organization plans to issue a sub-contract or sub-award, those sub-awardees must also have a unique entity identifier (UEI number). Those entities can register for a UEI only at SAM.gov.

If an organization does not have an active registration in SAM.gov prior to submitting an application, the application could be deemed **ineligible.** All organizations applying for grants (except individuals) must obtain these registrations, the latter are free of charge.

Note: As of April 2022, a DUNS number is no longer required for federal assistance applications.

The 2 CFR 200 requires that sub-grantees obtain a UEI number. Please note the UEI for sub-grantees is not required at the time of application but will be required before an award is processed and/or directed to a sub-grantee.

Note: The process of obtaining or renewing a SAM.gov registration may take anywhere from 4-8 weeks. Please begin your registration as early as possible.

- Organizations **based in the United States** or that pay employees within the United States will need an Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.

- Organizations **based outside of the United States** and that do not pay employees within the United States do not need an EIN from the IRS but do need a UEI number prior to registering in SAM.gov.
- **Please note that as of November 2022 and February 2022 respectively, organizations based outside of the United States that do not intend to apply for U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) awards are no longer required to have a NATO Commercial and Government Entity (NCAGE) code or CAGE code to apply for non-DoD foreign assistance funding opportunities.** If an applicant organization is mid-registration and wishes to remove a CAGE or NCAGE code from their SAM.gov registration, the applicant should submit a help desk ticket ("incident") with the Federal Service Desk (FSD) online at www.fsd.gov using the following language: "I do not intend to seek financial assistance from the Department of Defense. I do not wish to obtain a CAGE or NCAGE code. I understand that I will need to submit my registration after this incident is resolved in order to have my registration activated."

Submission Dates and Times

Application Deadline: All applications must be received by **July 10, 2023** at 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time. For the purposes of determining if an award is submitted on time, officials will utilize the time stamp provided by Grants.gov. This deadline is firm and is not a rolling deadline. If organizations fail to meet the deadline noted above, their applications will be considered ineligible and will not be considered for funding.

Question Deadline: For questions on this solicitation, please contact KabulPDSProposals@state.gov Questions must be received on or before **June 16, 2023**, at 11:59 p.m., U.S. Eastern Time. Applicants should not expect an email response to questions, as questions received before the deadline will be answered in a question and answer document and posted at http://www.grants.gov and Grant Opportunities - U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan (usembassy.gov).

Funding Restrictions

- **Construction:** Any award made as a result of this NOFO will not allow for construction activities or costs.
- **Pre-award Costs:** Any costs incurred prior to the award start date in the Federal Notice of Award are incurred at the recipient's own risk. Approval of these costs requires authorization of the Grants Officer to be considered allowable, will only be considered on a case-by-case basis, and will only be authorized in extraordinary circumstances. Applicants should assume that any costs incurred before the start date on the Federal Notice of Award will not be authorized.

Submission Requirements
This section provides the application submission and receipt instructions for program applications. Please read the following instructions carefully and completely.

Electronic delivery via www.grants.gov
PDS is participating in the Grants.gov initiative to provide the grant community a single site to find and apply for grant funding opportunities. **PDS requires applicants to submit their applications electronically through Grants.gov. Applications submitted via any other means such as email will not be accepted.**

To submit an application via Grants.gov, all organizations applying for grants (except individuals) must obtain these registrations. All are free of charge:

1. www.SAM.gov registration (which will generate a UEI). An active SAM registration (www.SAM.gov) with current information at all times during which they have an active federal award or an application under consideration by a federal awarding agency. Applicants must be fully registered in SAM before submitting an application; applicants that do not have an active SAM registration will be deemed ineligible and will not be considered for an award. For information on how to register with SAM, see https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/organization-registration/step-2-register-with-sam.html and https://eportal.nspa.nato.int/AC135Public/scage/CageList.aspx#show-video-

popup. Note that when SAM registration is complete the organization will be issued a SAM.gov-generated UEI. SAM registration must be renewed annually. The Department may determine that the applicant is not qualified to receive an award and use this determination as a basis for making an award to another applicant.

2. A Grants.gov account. Instructions on how to register for a Grants.gov account can be found here: https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/registration.html.

The registration process can take up to five weeks to complete. Therefore, registration should be done in sufficient time to ensure it does not affect your ability to meet required submission deadlines.

Grants.gov has a full set of instructions on how to apply for opportunities on its website at http://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/apply-for-grants.html.

Visit the Adobe Software Compatibility page on Grants.gov to download the appropriate version of the software at https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/adobe-software-compatibility.html.

Grants.gov does not accept all UTF-8 special characters in file attachment names. Please note the file name restrictions at https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/applicants/submitting-utf-8-special-characters.html.

Grants.gov recommends submitting your application package 24-48 hours prior to the submission deadline to provide you with time to correct any potential technical issues that disrupt the initial application submission. Grants.gov provides customer support via the toll-free number 1-800-518-4726 and via email at support@grants.gov. For questions related to the specific grant opportunity, contact KabulPDSProposals@state.gov . Please note, PDS cannot assist with questions on or technical issues with www.grants.gov. Applicants experiencing issues with Grants.gov should contact the Grants.gov Help Desk.

Timely receipt requirements and proof of timely submission

All applications must be received by the deadline communicated in this NOFO. Proof of timely submission is automatically recorded by Grants.gov. An electronic time stamp is generated within the system when the application is successfully received by Grants.gov. Applicants will receive an acknowledgement of receipt and a tracking number from Grants.gov with the successful transmission of their application. Applicants should print this receipt and save it as proof of timely submission.

When PDS successfully retrieves the application from Grants.gov and acknowledges the download of submissions, Grants.gov will provide an electronic acknowledgment of receipt to the email address of the Authorized Organization Representative. Proof of timely submission shall be the date and time that Grants.gov receives your application. Applications received by Grants.gov after the established due date for the program will be considered late and will not be considered for funding.

Applicants using dial-up connections should be aware that transmission should take some time before Grants.gov receives it. Grants.gov will provide either an error or a successfully received transmission message. The Grants.gov Contact Center reports that some applicants abort the transmission because they think that nothing is occurring during the transmission process. Please be patient and give the system time to process the application. Uploading and transmitting many files, particularly electronic forms with associated XML schemas, will take some time to be processed.

E. APPLICATION REVIEW INFORMATION

1. **Criteria:** Each application submitted under this announcement will be evaluated and rated on the basis of the criteria enumerated below. The criteria are designed to assess the quality of the proposed project, and to determine the likelihood of its success.
    - **Quality and Feasibility of the Program Idea – 25 points:** The program idea should be innovative and well developed, with sufficient detail about how project activities will be carried out. The proposals should demonstrate originality and outline clear, achievable objectives. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline. The project scope is appropriate and clearly defined. Proposals should also demonstrate how the program will support diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) principles and engage underserved communities in their program's administration, design, and implementation.

    - **Organizational Capacity and Record on Previous Grants – 25 points:**
        - The project proposal demonstrates that the organization has sufficient expertise, skills, and human resources to implement the project.
        - The organization demonstrates that it has a clear understanding of the underlying issue that the project will address.
        - The organization demonstrates capacity for successful planning and responsible fiscal management. This includes a financial management system and a bank account.
        - Applicants who have received grant funds previously have been compliant with applicable rules and regulations.
        - Where partners are described, the applicant details each partner's respective role and provides curriculum vitae (CVs) for persons responsible for the project and financial administration. Proposed personnel, institutional resources, and partners are adequate and appropriate

    - **Project Planning/Ability to Achieve Objectives – 20 points:** The project plan is well developed, with sufficient detail about how activities will be carried out. The proposal specifies target audiences, participant recruitment, and geographic areas of implementation. The proposal outlines clear, achievable objectives. The proposal includes a reasonable implementation timeline. The project scope is appropriate and clearly defined.

- **Budget – 10 points:** The budget and narrative justification are sufficiently detailed. The budget demonstrates that the organization has devoted time to accurately determine expenses associated with the project instead of providing rough estimates. Costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed activities and anticipated results. The results and proposed outcomes justify the total cost of the project. Budget items are reasonable, allowable, and allocable.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation - 10 points:** There is a complete and thorough draft submission of a M&E Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP). This will include a list of proposed project activities, corresponding milestone, output, and outcome indicators, a description of data collection methods, and a timeline for collecting such information. The proposal presents a clear theory of change on how the program will address that problem. Further, if the project requires selecting participants, or beneficiaries, the proposal should articulate how the selection will be done in an equitable way. Use of the suggested template (Annexes 2 & 2.1) will satisfy these requirements. Funded projects will have their plans finalized during the negotiation phase, and monitoring plans may be subject to periodic updates throughout the life of the project.

- **Sustainability – 10 points:** The project proposal describes clearly the approach that will be used to ensure maximum sustainability or advancement of project goals after the end of project activity.

2. Review and Selection Process

It will take up to 120 days from the application deadline before an award or decline notice is sent from the Embassy to applicants. Due to the volume of proposals received, individual responses to requests for updates prior to the 120-day timeframe may not be returned until final review of proposals and issuance of an award is completed. PDS utilizes the following review and selection process:

After the NOFO closes, applications are reviewed for eligibility. Those applications found to be ineligible will be removed from the selection process. Applications found to be eligible will be forwarded to a review committee for consideration. The review committee will score eligible proposals based on the funding criteria provided in the NOFO. The top applicant(s) will go through additional vetting, risk assessments, and negotiations with a designated PDS representative. If and when the Grants Officer is satisfied, s/he will issue the award(s). Once a grant award(s) is made from this solicitation, those applicants whose proposals were not selected for funding will be notified via email. PDS will send such notifications to the email address listed in box 8f of the applicant’s SF424. Applicants should expect to be notified if their proposal has been selected for award within 120 days of the submission deadline.

3. Responsibility/Qualification Information in SAM.gov (formerly, FAPIIS)

For any Federal award under a notice of funding opportunity, if the Federal awarding agency anticipates that the total Federal share will be greater than the simplified acquisition threshold over the period of performance (see §200.01 Simplified Acquisition Threshold), this section must also inform applicants that:

- The Federal awarding agency, prior to making a Federal award with a total amount of Federal share greater than the simplified acquisition threshold, is required to review and consider any information about the applicant that is in the U.S. government designated integrity and performance system accessible through SAM.gov (see 41 U.S.C. 2313);

- An applicant, at its option, may review and comment on any information about itself that a Federal awarding agency previously entered. Currently, federal agencies create integrity records in the integrity module of the Contractor Performance Assessment and Reporting System (CPARS) and these records are visible as responsibility/qualification records in SAM.gov;

- The Federal awarding agency will consider any comments by the applicant, in addition to the other information in the designated integrity and performance system, in making a judgment about the applicant's integrity, business ethics, and record of performance under Federal awards when completing the review of risk posed by applicants as described in §200.206 Federal awarding agency review of risk posed by applicants.

F. FEDERAL AWARD ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

1. **Federal Award Notices:** The grant award or cooperative agreement will be written, signed, awarded, and administered by the Grants Officer. The assistance award agreement is the authorizing document and it will be provided to the recipient for review and signature by email. The recipient may only start incurring program expenses beginning on the start date shown on the grant award document signed by the Grants Officer.

If a proposal is selected for funding, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance is at the discretion of the Department of State.

Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government, nor does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received.

Payment Method:

Payment under this award should be requested by completing form SF-270—Request for Advance or Reimbursement and submitting the form to the Grants Officer representative/Program Officer. Unless otherwise stipulated, the Recipient of the award may request payments on a reimbursement or advance basis.

Advance payments must be limited to the minimum amounts needed and be timed to be in accordance with the actual, immediate cash requirements of the Recipient of the award in carrying out the purpose of this award. The timing and amount of advance payments must be as close as is administratively feasible to the actual disbursements by the Recipient for direct program or project costs and the proportionate share of any allowable indirect costs.
Failure to comply with the terms and conditions of the award may result in payment delays

2. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

Terms and Conditions:
Before submitting an application, applicants should review all the terms and conditions and required certifications which will apply to this award, to ensure that they will be able to comply.

These include:

- 2 CFR 25 - UNIVERSAL IDENTIFIER AND SYSTEM FOR AWARD MANAGEMENT
- 2 CFR 170 - REPORTING SUBAWARD AND EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION INFORMATION
- 2 CFR 175 - AWARD TERM FOR TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS
- 2 CFR 182 - GOVERNMENTWIDE REQUIREMENTS FOR DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE (FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE)
- 2 CFR 183 - NEVER CONTRACT WITH THE ENEMY
- 2 CFR 600 – DEPARTMENT OF STATE REQUIREMENTS
- U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE STANDARD TERMS AND CONDITIONS

In accordance with the Office of Management and Budget's guidance located at 2 CFR part 200, all applicable Federal laws, and relevant Executive guidance, the Department of State will review and consider applications for funding, as applicable to specific programs, pursuant to this notice of funding opportunity in accordance with the following: NOTE:

- Guidance for Grants and Agreements in Title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR), as updated in the Federal Register's 85 FR 49506 on August 13, 2020, particularly on:

- Selecting recipients most likely to be successful in delivering results based on the program objectives through an objective process of evaluating Federal award applications (2 CFR part 200.205),
- Prohibiting the purchase of certain telecommunication and video surveillance services or equipment in alignment with section 889 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2019 (Pub. L. No. 115—232) (2 CFR part 200.216),
- Promoting the freedom of speech and religious liberty in alignment with *Promoting Free Speech and Religious Liberty* (E.O. 13798) and *Improving Free Inquiry, Transparency, and Accountability at Colleges and Universities* (E.O. 13864) (§§ 200.300, 200.303, 200.339, and 200.341),
- Providing a preference, to the extent permitted by law, to maximize use of goods, products, and materials produced in the United States (2 CFR part 200.322), and
- Terminating agreements in whole or in part to the greatest extent authorized by law, if an award no longer effectuates the program goals or agency priorities (2 CFR part 200.340).

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility
The Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA) prioritizes inclusive and integrated programs that address barriers to access for individuals and groups based on their religion, gender, disabilities, ethnicity, or sexual orientation and gender identity. In accordance with the Executive Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Underserved Communities, proposals should demonstrate how the program will advance principles of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) related to race, ethnicity, religion, income, geography, gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or disability.

Proposals should demonstrate how addressing racial equity and/or the status of underserved communities will enhance the program's goals and objectives, as well as the experience of participants.

The support of underserved communities will be part of the review criteria for this opportunity. Therefore, proposals should clearly demonstrate how the program will support and advance equity and engage underserved communities in the program's administration, design, and implementation phases.

Diversity:
The term "diversity" means the practice of including the many communities, identities, races, ethnicities, backgrounds, abilities, cultures, and beliefs of a community.

Equity:
The term "equity" means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as ethnic minorities, and indigenous persons, members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with

disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

Inclusion:
The term “inclusion” means the recognition, appreciation, and use of the talents and skills of persons of all backgrounds.

Accessibility:
The term “accessibility” means the design, construction, development, and maintenance of facilities, information and communication technology, programs, and services so that all people, including people with disabilities, can fully and independently use them.

Underserved communities:
The term “underserved communities” refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of “equity.”

High Risk Designation: Awardees that are deemed to be high risk will be held to special award conditions. Due to the challenging operating environment in Afghanistan, awards issued under this NOFO will be designated high risk. At a minimum, the recipient will be required to submit quarterly detailed financial reports (see Reporting Requirements below). Recipients may also be required, upon request of the GO or GOR, to provide electronic copies of receipts or other supporting documentation (e.g., timesheets, travel documents) for costs incurred. The government may withhold 10% of the U.S. government total of the award until final reports have been reviewed and approved by the GO. The recipient may be required to pay all salaries supported by the grant via electronic funds transfer. Other special award conditions may also be included if deemed appropriate by the Grants Officer.

Monitoring and Evaluation: In line with the Department of State’s Evaluation Policy, PDS may include this award in its program monitoring and evaluation efforts. When applicable and feasible, the recipient shall cooperate with Grants Officer (GO) and Grants Officer Representative (GOR) requests to contribute data on specific performance measures and indicators; consider GO and GOR input on design and methodology of recipient-led monitoring and evaluation efforts; provide any monitoring and evaluation reports produced under the award to the GO and GOR for review; and incorporate the project into any third-party monitoring evaluation efforts that PAS may initiate.

3. Reporting

Reporting Requirements: Recipients are required to submit quarterly program progress and financial reports throughout the project period. The quarterly progress report should include an up-to-date copy of the PMP datasheet. Progress and financial reports are due 30 days after the reporting period. Final certified programmatic and financial reports are due 120 days after the close of the project period.

All reports are to be submitted electronically.

Awardees that are deemed to be high risk may be required to submit more extensive and frequent reports until their high-risk designation has been removed. Given a high-risk designation, the recipient maybe required to submit quarterly detailed financial reports in addition to the reports outlined in point 1 above. These reports must provide a line-item breakdown of costs incurred or paid (consistent with the recipient's accounting method) on the project, including cost share; should compare the amount incurred or paid (consistent with the recipient's accounting method) on each line-item and budget category to the amounts in the approved budget; and communicate the balance remaining in each line item and budget category.

The awardee must provide the Embassy on an annual basis an inventory of all the U.S. government-provided equipment using the SF-428 form.

Foreign Assistance Data Review: As required by Congress, the Department of State must make progress in its efforts to improve tracking and reporting of foreign assistance data through the Foreign Assistance Data Review (FADR). The FADR requires tracking of foreign assistance activity data from budgeting, planning, and allocation through obligation and disbursement. Successful applicants will be required to report and draw down federal funding based on the appropriate FADR Data Elements, indicated within their award documentation. In cases of more than one FADR Data Element, typically program or sector and/or regions or country, the successful applicant will be required to maintain separate accounting records.

Applicants should be aware of the post award reporting requirements reflected in 2 CFR 200 Appendix XII—Award Term and Condition for Recipient Integrity and Performance Matters.

Awardees are required to comply with the following **Special Provision for Performance in a Designated Combat Area:**

The Recipient must report and account for all employees, subrecipient personnel, and contract personnel working under grants or cooperative agreements working in contingency operations outside the United States that involve combat operations. The database to collect this information, called the Synchronized Pre-Deployment Operational Tracker (SPOT), is managed by the Department of Defense.

In coordination with the Grants Officer and Grants Officer Representative, the Recipient generally provides this information to the Department of State SPOT Program Manager (AQMops@state.gov). The Department SPOT Program Manager enters information provided by the Recipient directly into the SPOT system.

For Recipients with personnel who are **NOT** performing private security functions and who do not need access to U.S. government support or facilities:

- Personnel, including U.S. citizens, third country nationals, and local personnel, are accounted for anonymously, in aggregate.
- The Recipient must obtain an aggregate count template from the Grants Officer or Grants Officer Representative, or directly from the SPOT Program Manager (AQMops@state.gov), and return the completed form to the Grants Officer/ Grants Officer Representative or SPOT Program Manager.
- The Recipient is responsible for updating the aggregate count every quarter by providing updated information via the "Aggregate Count" template to SPOT Program Manager for each SPOT award.

For Recipients with personnel who **ARE** performing a private security function; require access to U.S. government support, facilities, or services; or who may be eligible for special refugee or immigration status under U.S. regulation:

- The personnel funded under that award must be entered into SPOT individually with all required personal information.
- The Recipient must enter this information into the SPOT database directly. Unlike the aggregate count process, the Department's SPOT Program Manager does not enter this information into SPOT on behalf of the Recipient.
- The Recipient starts the process by registering for an account in SPOT by contacting the help desk at https://spot.dmdc.mil/.

Note: Recipients utilizing armed private security personnel, whether employed directly or via contract, are required to adhere to post policies and procedures regarding private security contractors. As specific post policies and procedures differ in scope and applicability, the Recipient is advised to review post policies carefully and direct any questions to the embassy Regional Security Office through the Grants Officer or Grants Officer Representative.

In addition, the Recipient is reminded that only the Grants Officer has the authority to modify this Notice of Award. Recipients shall proceed with any security guidance provided by the Regional Security Officer; however, the Recipient must advise the Grants Officer and Grants Officer Representative of the guidance received and any potential cost or schedule impact.

G. FEDERAL AWARDING AGENCY CONTACTS

- For questions on the requirements of this solicitation, contact the Grants Manager, Public Diplomacy Section, U.S. Mission to Afghanistan (Doha), at:
  Email: KabulPDSProposals@state.gov *(preferred method of communication)*
  Note: PDS cannot assist with technical issues with Grants.gov.

- To inquire about the process for obtaining a NICRA, contact AQM-NICRA@state.gov.
- For questions relating to Grants.gov, please contact the Grants.gov Contact Center at 1-800-518-4726 or international 1-606-545-5035. Please note, KabulPDSProposals@state.gov is unable to assist with technical questions or problems applicants experience with Grants.gov, UEI, or SAM. Please refer to the contact information for these organizations/processes provided in this Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

Questions and Answers or FAQ will be posted on http://www.grants.gov and Grant Opportunities - U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan (usembassy.gov).

H. OTHER INFORMATION

Disclaimers

The federal government is not obligated to make any federal award as a result of this announcement. Issuance of this NOFO does not constitute an award commitment on the part of the U.S. government; neither does it commit the U.S. government to pay for costs incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals. Further, the U.S. government reserves the right to reject any or all proposals received. The U.S. government also reserves the right to make an award in excess of the award ceiling and the right to make an award below the floor outlined in this NOFO. PDS reserves the right to award funding to applicants under this announcement for a period of up to two years after the application deadline.

If a proposal is funded, the Department of State has no obligation to provide any additional future funding in connection with the award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or extend the period of performance, including exercising option periods, is at the total discretion of the Department of State.

The issuance of an award under this NOFO is subject to funds availability. Awards may be granted only if appropriated funds are allocated to the U.S. Embassy in Kabul by Department of State central budget authorities.

Applicants should be familiar with the U.S. Department of State's guidance on travel to Afghanistan, available at http://travel.state.gov.

Branding Requirements

As a condition of receipt of a grant award, all materials produced pursuant to the award, including training materials, materials for recipients or materials to communicate or promote with foreign audiences a program, event, project, or some other activity under an agreement, including but not limited to invitations to events, press materials, and backdrops, podium signs, etc. must be marked appropriately with the standard, rectangular U.S. flag in a size and prominence equal to (or greater than) any other logo or identity. Note: Exceptions to the branding requirement are allowable under certain conditions. If an applicant is notified that their award has been chosen for funding, the Grants Officer will determine, in consultation with the applicant, if an exception is applicable.

ANNEX 1. BUDGET CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS

The following provides a description of the types of costs to be included in each budget category.

a) **Personnel** – Identify staffing requirements by each position title and brief description of duties. For clarity, please list the annual salary of each position, percentage of time, and number of months devoted to the project (e.g., Administrative Director: $30,000/year x 25% x 8.5 months; calculation: $30,000/12 = $2,500 x 25% x 8.5 months = $5,312).

b) **Fringe Benefits** – State benefit costs separately from salary costs and explain how benefits are computed for each category of employee – specify type and rate.

c) **Travel** – Staff and any participant travel
   - International Airfare – list the route, number of trips, and cost per ticket.
   - In-country Travel – list the route and indicate the means of transportation, number of trips, and cost per trip.
   - Travel in the United States, if any – list the route and indicate the means of transportation, number of trips, and cost per trip.
   - Per diem: Includes lodging, meals, and incidentals for both participant and staff travel. Rates of maximum allowances for U.S. and foreign travel are available from the following website: http://aoprals.state.gov/web920/per_diem.asp. Per diem rates may not exceed the published U.S. government allowance rates; however, institutions may use per diem rates lower than official government rates.

   Please note that all travel, where applicable, must be in compliance with the Fly America Act.

d) **Equipment –** Please include equipment required, defined as tangible personal property having a useful life of more than one year and an acquisition cost of $5,000 or more per unit.

e) **Supplies** – The specifications and cost of each type of supply proposed (e.g., desktop computer with pre-installed software) must be included in this section. List items separately using unit costs (and the percentage of each unit cost being charged to the award) for office supplies (e.g., office paper and ink: $50/month x 50% = $25/month x 12 months).

f) **Contractual –**
   - **Sub-awards and contracts** – For each sub-grant/contract, please provide a detailed line-item breakdown for specific services. In the sub-grant/contract

budgets, provide the same level of detail for personnel, travel, supplies, equipment, direct costs, fringe benefits, and indirect costs as required of the direct applicant.

- **Consultant Fees** – For example, lecture fees and honoraria for outside speakers or independent evaluators: list number of people and rates per day (e.g., 2 x $150/day x 2 days).

g) Construction – For this solicitation, construction costs are not applicable.

h) Other Direct Costs – Other costs directly associated with the program that do not fit in the other categories. For instance, shipping costs for materials and equipment or applicable taxes. All "Other" or "Miscellaneous" expenses must be itemized and explained. These will vary depending on the nature of the project, and the inclusion of each should be justified in the budget justification narrative. Examples may include photocopying, postage, telephone/fax, or printing (e.g., Telephone: $50/month x 50% = $25/month x 12 months).

i) Indirect Costs – These are costs that cannot be linked directly to the program activities, such as overhead costs needed to help keep the organization operating. Organizations claiming indirect costs should have an established Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA). A copy of the NICRA should be provided with the proposal package. If sub-grantees are claiming indirect costs, they should have an established NICRA, and it should also be submitted with the proposal package. Information on how to obtain a NICRA rate is listed in Section G. **If a non-profit organization does not have a NICRA, and the proposal budget has a line item for indirect cost charges, those indirect charges may not exceed 10% of Modified Total Direct Costs.** The 10% maximum does not apply to for-profit entities. For-profit entities that do not have a NICRA but do have a formally established General and Administrative (G&A) rate may apply the G&A rate. For-profit entities that do not have a formally established G&A rate should allocate indirect costs into the appropriate direct cost category.

ANNEX 2. PDS M&E PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN (PMP)

APPLICANT NAME:
PROGRAM/PROJECT NAME:
PERIOD OF PERFORMANCE:

1. M&E NARRATIVE

Describe how you plan to monitor and evaluate performance and outcomes (results) of the proposed project: The narrative should demonstrate the organization's capacity to implement the PMP proposed and answer the following (limit one page):

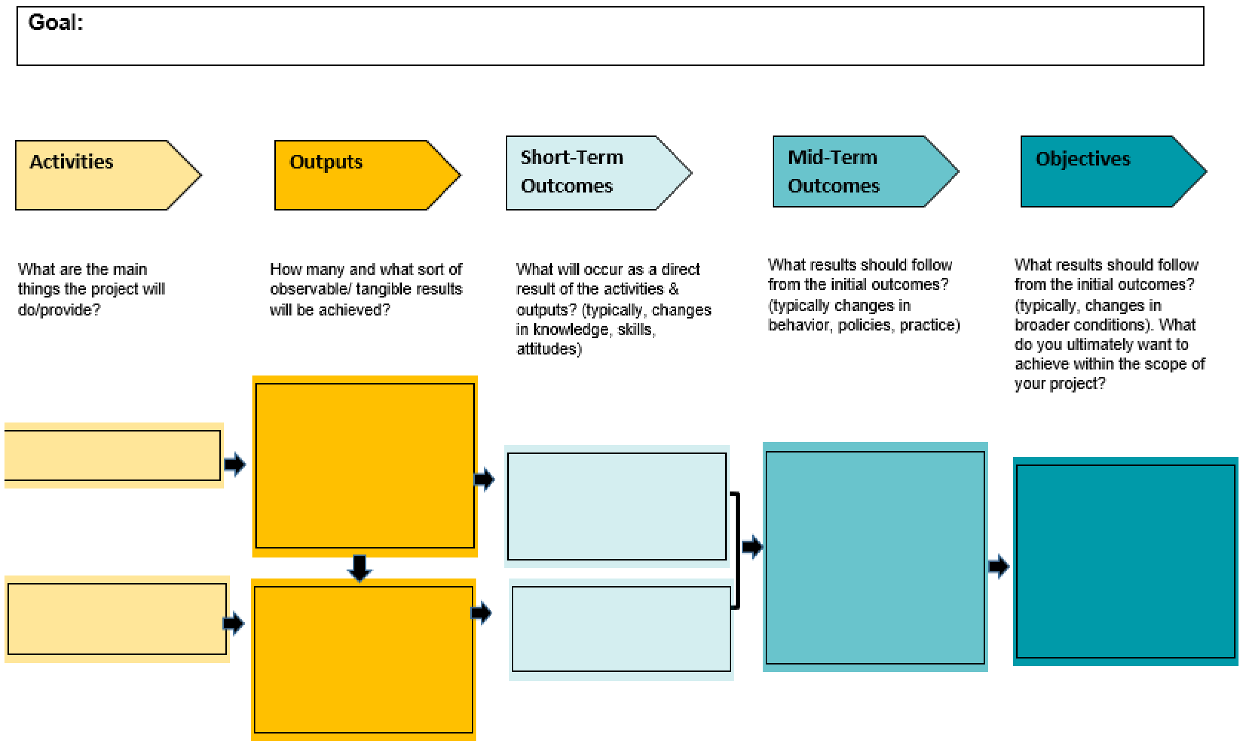
1. *Describe your organization's capacity to implement the PMP proposed. Which individuals will be responsible for overseeing M&E activities? Briefly note their qualifications and experience. How much of the program's budget will be allocated towards M&E expenditures?*
2. *What does progress look like for this project and how will you know progress when you see it? What will you observe and measure to know change is happening (e.g. increase in awareness, change in behavior, attitudes, skills)?*
3. *What tools and methods will you use to observe and measure the change you note above (e.g. focus groups, online vs in-person surveys, social media engagement)?*

2. THEORY OF CHANGE

To demonstrate that your project is measurable by design, please include the intended theory of change. This can be done with (1) a diagram ***OR*** *(2) in narrative form. Diagrams are preferred, but narratives are also accepted.*

Option 1: Diagram:

A Theory of Change diagram is a type of logic model that explicitly illustrates the causal pathways between activities, outputs, outcomes, and objectives. There are many versions. Any version that clearly demonstrates the project's logical framework is acceptable. Additional guidance is available in the Resources section of the PMP Instructions (Attachment 2). One example is as follows:



Option 2: Narrative If-Then Statements

A narrative representation of Theory of Change is one, or a series of If-Then statements. "If x (action/intervention) is completed, then y (result of an action aka. short-term outcomes) which will result in (mid-term outcomes)."

> *Example: If independent journalists complete a series of training sessions on media literacy, then it will result in higher-quality investigative reporting on sensitive topics such as gender violence, violent extremism, the rights of minorities, etc., which will result in increased government transparency because media professionals will have the knowledge and skills to ...*

3. PMP DATASHEET:

Please fill in the below PMP. If selected for funding, the recipient will be expected to submit and update this document as part of its required narrative reporting. For most awards, narrative reports are required quarterly. See the "PMP Instructions" for guidance on filling in this datasheet.

Refer to your Theory of Change. For each Outcome and Output, please identify indicators that would demonstrate your progress. Then, establish targets for each indicator across the life of the project. Once approved by PDS, you will update this document and submit with your regular report. For most awards, this will be quarterly. For projects that exceed four quarters, consider using the Excel version of this datasheet, which is available upon request.

GOAL:												
AUDIENCE:												
PROBLEM STATEMENT:												
OBJECTIVE 1:												
Activity	Outcome/Output Indicator Description	Data Collection Method	Q1 Month-Month		Q2 Month-Month		Q3 Month-Month		Q4 Month-Month		Total Target Achieved	% of Total Target Achieved
			Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		
	Outcome 1.1:											
	Output 1.1.1:											
	Output 1.1.2:											
	Outcome 1.2:											
	Output 1.2.1:											
	Output 1.2.2:											

	Outcome 1.3:											
	Output 1.3.1:											
	Output 1.3.2:											

OBJECTIVE 2:

Activity	Outcome/Output Indicator Description	Data Collection Method	Q1 Month-Month		Q2 Month-Month		Q3 Month-Month		Q4 Month-Month		Total Target Achieved	% of Target Achieved
			Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		
	Outcome 2.1:											
	Output 2.1.1:											
	Output 2.1.2:											
	Outcome 2.2:											
	Output 2.2.1:											
	Output 2.2.2:											
	Outcome 2.3:											
	Output 2.3.1:											
	Output 2.3.2:											

OBJECTIVE 3:

Activity	Outcome/Output Indicator Description	Data Collection Method	Q1 Month-Month		Q2 Month-Month		Q3 Month-Month		Q4 Month-Month		Total Target Achieved	% of Target Achieved
			Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual	Target	Actual		
	Outcome 3.1:											

	Output 3.1.1:											
	Output 3.1.2:											
	Outcome 3.2:											
	Output 3.2.1:											
	Output 3.2.2:											
	Outcome 3.3:											
	Output 3.3.1:											
	Output 3.3.2:											

ANNEX 2.1: INSTRUCTIONS: PDS PERFORMANCE MONITORING PLAN (PMP)

Overview:

The Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) is a program management tool designed to measure progress towards the goals and objectives identified in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO). The PMP also clarifies how and when the grantee will collect data on indicators, the resources they intend to use for both program implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). Please see page 3 for key terms and concepts.

PDS recognizes that this document is likely to change over the life of the project, and as such, it will be a work-in-progress. Please be as detailed as possible when filling out the PMP.

If your proposal is accepted, this PMP must be approved by a United States Government M&E Specialist prior to finalizing your grants package.

Recommendation: Keep your PMPs transparent, concise and as simple as possible.

The following instructions are meant as a resource for grantees. This document supports grantees when filling in their PMP template (Attachment 1). However, this document can also be used as a resource to complete similar PMP or M&E Plan templates specific to your organization, and/or, upon receiving an award, as a reference sheet throughout the duration of your program.
This guidance document is not meant to be included in your application, but rather used as a resource. Please maintain this for your internal records.

Filling out the Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP):

1. M&E Narrative: The narrative should provide a big picture overview of how the applicant plans to monitor and evaluate performance and outcomes (results) of the proposed project.

Describe how you plan to monitor and evaluate performance and outcomes (results) of the proposed project: The narrative should demonstrate the organization's capacity to implement the PMP proposed and answer the following (limit one page):

1. *Describe your organization's capacity to implement the PMP proposed. Which individuals will be responsible for overseeing M&E activities? Briefly note their qualifications and experience. How much of the program's budget will be allocated towards M&E expenditures?*
2. *What does progress look like for this project and how will you know progress when you see it? What will you observe and measure to know change is happening (e.g. increase in awareness, change in behavior, attitudes, skills)?*

3. *What tools and methods will you use to observe and measure the change you note above (e.g. focus groups, online vs in-person surveys, social media engagement)?*

2. M&E PMP Datasheet:
   a. **Problem Statement and Objectives**: The Goal, Audience, Problem Statement, and Objectives should be identical to the narrative in your proposal. Continuity across all documents is critical.

b. **Activity:** Activities should be the same as those activities discussed in your proposal. If using the **PMP Datasheet** from the PMP Template (Attachment 1), only include one activity per box, aligning the activity with your outcome and output indicators. Note that the data sheet can be scaled up or down to meet the scope and timeline of the grant.

c. **Outcome/Output Indicator Description:** Once the program's goals and objectives are defined, develop indicators for tracking progress towards achieving those goals. An indicator "indicates" process or change of a process/output or outcome. An **output** indicator is typically a simple count: # of hours, trainings, students, social media shares or likes, etc. These indicators are used as a basic accounting of what has happened. An **outcome** indicator shows change or progress towards objectives over time and can be both qualitative or quantitative. These indicators typically include percentage change (in understanding, perception, capacity, either increase or decrease), milestones, etc. **SEE A NOTE ON INDICATORS REFERENCE BELOW**

d. **Data Collection Method:** Data Collection Methods vary. After creating monitoring indicators, decide on methods for gathering data and how often data will be recorded to track indicators. There are several online resources on how to conduct data collection. Please see Useful Resources for Gathering Data at the end of this document. Some common data collection methods include:

- Surveys
- Key Informant Interviews
- Baseline/2nd Survey
- Polling
- Community interviews
- Focus Groups
- Pre/Post Test designs
- Social Media Analysis
- Count of likes, shares, etc.
- Basic counts
- Case studies
- Stakeholder meetings
- Field observation visits
- Organizational Capacity Assessments
- Document/Film/Image review
- Most Significant Change
- Mobile/Technology Solutions
- Sentiment Analysis.
- Social Network Analysis

e. Targets/Actuals:

Target: The desired value for an indicator, expressed as a measurable value. These should be identified in your proposal. Some NOFOs may request specific targets, and these should be included in your plan.

- Example 1: 75% increase from pre-test to post-test.
- Example 2: 65% of respondents agree more work is needed to ease tensions.
- Example 3: 10 workshops will be conducted.

Actual: This column is for reporting what occurred or what was completed. These will be recorded over the life of the project on a quarterly basis.

- Example 1: Post-test surveys indicated a 120% increase.
- Example 2: 60% of respondents agreed more work is needed to ease tensions.
- Example 3: 10 workshops were conducted.

f. **Total target achieved** refers to the cumulative completed value of each indicator. It must be updated with each quarterly report.

g. **Percent of target achieved** is calculated by dividing the total achieved by the total target. This must be calculated on a quarterly basis.

h. The PMP must be updated and submitted with the required narrative reporting schedule. For most awards, the requirement is Quarterly reporting. Input the Quarter of first reporting and the month range. If your program spans more than four quarters, consider using the Excel version of the PMP to ensure legibility and preserve formatting.

Key Terms

Evaluation	Evaluation is the process of determining the merit, worth or value of an activity, policy or program. An evaluation should provide information that is credible and useful, enabling the incorporation of lessons learned into the decision-making process of both recipients and donors.
Monitoring	Monitoring refers to the regular process of collecting data to determine what is working, not working, why, and what needs to be adjusted. This information is used to determine the program's overall success.
Theory of Change	A logical explanation of how an action or result will lead to a specific change in a particular place, time, and context. A Theory of Change allows you to specify your project's goals, outcomes, and outputs to show how they link and contribute to each stage in a logical manner. It promotes critical thinking and learning, and identifies assumptions about how change happens. A theory of change can also be based on the following construction: "if x (action/intervention), then y (result of an action)."
Goal	A goal refers to the overall aim of the project, sometimes referred to as the "most significant change." A goal is written as a clearly stated and achievable result. Additionally, goals tend to be lofty in nature and are not resource-dependent. Many projects can contribute to the same goal. The goal is listed in the NOFO and should be copied and pasted into the PMP.

Objective	An objective describes a change a project, program or organization wants to achieve or contribute to. Objectives can be understood as the pre-requisite changes that are necessary to achieving the broader and most significant change (goal). They are written as a statement of what the project aims to achieve. Objectives should be concrete, time-bound, and measurable. Follow SMART criteria (see below). Objectives are written in the NOFO and should be copied and pasted into the PMP. If appropriate, applicants can write their own objectives and write them into the PMP.
Outcome	Outcomes refer to the measurable results of an activity. They express the levels of performance or achievement due to the activity or service provided. They often describe who changed (the people being trained), what changed (the knowledge, attitudes or skills), and by how much. (Ex. After a job-skills training, 80% of program participants report using the skills they learned in three months after their course ended.) Outcomes may be short-term or long-term, and are often expressed by a percentage change.
Output	Outputs are the products, goods, and deliverables which result from activities. Outputs are not changes and are often expressed quantitively. (Ex: # of workshops, training hours, # pamphlets, # social media groups/posts, etc.)
Activity	The actions conducted (training, workshops, screenings, campaigns, etc.) to achieve objectives and contribute to the goal.
Indicator	Indicators are signals of change and are used to observe progress and measure actual results compared to expected results (targets). Indicators answer the "how" or "whether" a project is making progress toward objectives. Indicators are expressed quantitatively, should be objective, and measurable (Ex. numeric value, percentages, indices). Indicators should be SMART (see "A Note on Creating Indicators" below). Some indicators may be written in the NOFO; if so, they should be copied and pasted into the PMP.
Target	A target is the desired value for an indicator, expressed as a measurable value. Targets should be identified with the proposal and reflect what should be achieved over the life of the project. Targets will be compared against actual results. A target is defined for each indicator as part of the M&E PMP. Some targets may be written in the NOFO; if so, they should be copied and pasted into the PMP. Related terms: Benchmark, Milestone.
Method	A method is used to collect evidence to show progress towards PMP targets. Methods, sometimes called tools, are the data collection processes used to track indicators. Some example methods are focus groups, online vs in-person surveys, and social media engagement.

A Note on Creating a Theory of Change

Theories of change or logic frameworks are useful models that help organizations with strategic planning of a program or project. They are useful in logically thinking through and describing why a particular intervention activity will be effective and achieve the intended impact by addressing one's beliefs and assumptions about how a change will occur. A Theory of Change can be represented as a diagram (preferred), or as a narrative.

Diagram:
A Theory of Change diagram displays a causal model between what a program intends to do and the results it hopes to accomplish. Examples can be found within the Resources section at the end of this document.

1. Goal: A goal is written as a clearly stated and achievable result. Goals tend to be lofty in nature and are not resource-dependent. Many projects can contribute to the same goal. The goal is listed in the NOFO and should be copied and pasted into the PMP.
2. Objectives: The main objective(s) of the program is the starting point for your theory of change, from which everything else flows. This is the long-term change the program seeks to address. (ex. "Reduce youth unemployment through skills training")
3. Outcomes: Next, work backward from your objectives to think about the next level of changes that need to happen in order to achieve the set objectives. These can be thought of as the necessary pre-conditions that need to happen before creating change at the long-term level. This is a key and important part of the process, as too often, organizations jump from their goals to the activities without thinking through the changes that need to happen in between. Outcomes can be proposed in the short term, or the medium term. (Ex. "increase job-specific skills and experience"; "increase motivation to work")
4. Outputs: What outputs (products, services, facilities) will help you bring about the outcomes you have identified? Outputs should include a target number of direct products and deliverables. (Ex. Number of program participants trained in a skill).
5. Activities: What types of activities will help you reach the goal and associated objectives? Consider each short and medium-term outcomes is linked to proposed activities. (Ex. Workshops focused on skill development)

Narrative Form:
As you develop your Theory of Change, it is useful to develop a comprehensive description of your conception of how the program seeks to meet its objectives. Key elements of a Narrative Theory of Change include:

- A clear conceptualization of outcomes and how to get there (specific and realistic):
    - "If X, then Y"
        - X is the action or intervention

- Y is the result of that action

- Example: **If** young people increase job-specific abilities, **then** their employability will increase, resulting in higher youth employment rates.

A Note on Outputs vs Outcomes

Outputs and outcomes are terms that are used to describe change at various levels from the delivery of goods and services to long-term sustainable change in people's lives. To achieve desired long-term changes, there are several steps between an organization's activities and the desired change or impact. While outputs are the direct products of program activities, outcomes measure the effectiveness of an intervention. The table below distinguishes the difference between outputs and outcomes.

	Outputs	**Outcomes**
Measures	Direct products of program activities (a.k.a. deliverables)	Effectiveness of an intervention (progress towards goal and objectives)
Questions to ask	- How many people participated? - How many workshops were held? - How many pamphlets were distributed? - How many participants were trained in a particular skill?	- What has changed in the lives of individuals, families, organizations, or the community as a result of this program? - Has this program made a difference in a participant's comprehension / behavior / attitude / skill etc.? - How are the lives of program participants better as a result of the program?
Examples	# of youth trained in urban business development # of participants accepted into a program # of youth participants that visited cultural heritage site	% increase in opportunities for underprivileged youth to maintain viable and successful opportunities % increase in positive perceptions of US – host-country exchange programs Increased awareness of own's traditions and cultural heritage

Following is a PMP with example outcomes and outputs of common PDS programs that can be used as a guiding document.

Objective 1: Improve English language proficiency of journalists to communicate with export oriented business professionals						
Activity	Indicator	Data Collection	Year 1			
			Q1: Oct - Dec 2021		Q2: Jan - Mar 2022	
			Target	Actual	Target	Actual
English training courses for journalists	Outcome 1.1: Percentage of program participants who report using English in interviews three months after course.	Survey	0	0	50%	60%
	Output 1.1.1: 5 course module entitled "Introduction to reporting in English".	Activity reports	5	5	0	0
	Output 1.1.2: Number of published articles in English	Publication submissions	0	0	3	5
	Output 1.1.3: Number of program participants for "Introduction to reporting in English" module	Attendence sheets	20	18	0	0
Objective 1: Integrate cultural preservation into programs that develop and improve conditions for local communities.						
Local artisans are trained in preservation techniques	Outcome 1.1: Participants report increased income 3-6 months after training	Survey	0	0	30%	25%
	Output 1.1.1: # of participants trained on use of online digital resources to promote artisans' businesses	Track number of participants	50	16	50	84
	Outcome 1.1.2: # of courses on accounting and digital marketing	Activity reports	8	8	8	8
Objective 1: Provide youth with a platform to engage in open discussion, develop critical skills, engage in creative and innovative projects, and build						
Invite speaker(s) who have spent time in the US to share their experiences and create a pool of mentors for future leaders.	Outcome 1.1: Participants report an increased awareness on US culture, policies, and innovations.	Pre and post perception surveys	60%	75%	60%	60%
	Output 1.1.1: At least one American Speaker program a month by each corner, after the Consulate's approval.	Activity reports	12	10	9	9

A Note on Creating Indicators

Once a program's goals and objectives are defined, it is time to define and develop **indicators** to track progress towards those goals. Indicators are a signal of change that contains qualitative or quantitative information. Indicators can measure process (i.e., are activities being implemented as planned?), and can also measure outcomes (i.e., have program activities made a difference?) Indicators should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART):

- **Specific:** Clearly defined, non-subjective, and defines exactly what needs to change
- **Measurable:** Change can be demonstrated, and is quantifiable using available tools and methods.
- **Achievable:** Fits within capacity, budget and other resources.
- **Relevant:** Tied to intended outputs and outcomes.
- **Time-Bound:** Start and end point clearly defined.

Indicators should include the following:

- What is being measured (Ex. awareness or perceptions on *x*)
- Unit of measurement (Ex. number of program participants)
- Pre-program status, where applicable (Ex. number of program participants with awareness on *x*)
- Direction and magnitude of intended change (Ex. increase from 53 to 94)

Some examples of output indicators are:

- Number of trainings held on media literacy
- Number of outreach activities conducted at youth-friendly locations
- Number of pamphlets distributed at youth-friendly locations
- Percent of youth trained in media literacy techniques
- Percent of youth reached with social media posts on media literacy

Some examples of outcome indicators are:

- Percent of youth posting about media literacy awareness on their social media pages
- Number and percent of trained leaders offering training services to other youth in the community
- Number and percent of social media users that publicly comment and refute questionable social media posts